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ABSTRACT

Intended especially for teachers who might be a little intimidated by the art of playwriting, this guide provides a step-by-step plan for using drama in the classroom in grades 4-8 to build children's language arts and thinking skills. The guide features a series of engaging activities where students will learn how to write dialogue, set scenes, and communicate emotions through expressive language and mime. The guide introduces the specific form of playwriting in lesson 1. Each subsequent lesson in the guide introduces a new idea, then builds on concepts taught in previous sections. Each lesson in the guide includes: (1) the Director's Chair, an explanation of the techniques or skills developed in the lesson, including short sample scripts; (2) prewriting activities that help students become more familiar with the topic and give them opportunities to experiment before they tackle a new technique; (3) Stage Write activities with step-by-step instructions for writing scripts using new skills; (4) helpful hints that provide further guidelines for the activities; and (5) extensions that can be used during writer's workshops or as homework or learning center assignments. The guide approaches performing or reading a script as a form of publishing out loud--scripts should be shared with the entire class and an area of the room should be designated as the stage for script-sharing. (NKA)

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ED 396 336

STAGE WRITE

GOOD APPLE

Grades

A Playwriting Curriculum for Kids and Teachers

By Norman Delue
and
Thomas B. Hayward

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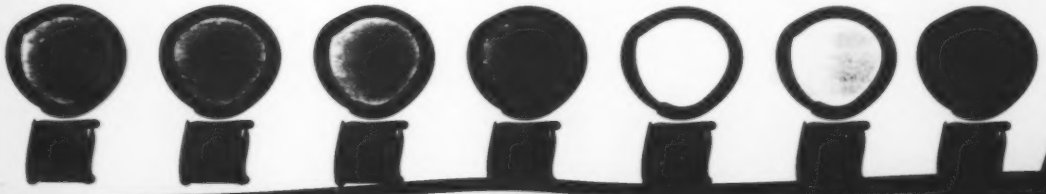

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A Playwriting Curriculum for Kids and Teachers

By Norman Delue
and
Thomas B. Hayward

Good Apple

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of history, humans have felt the urge to communicate their ideas, record the events of their lives, and express deeply held spiritual beliefs. As they experimented with different narrative forms, people gradually discovered the pleasures and possibilities of drama. Dialogue evolved from simple sung lines to words spoken by an individual as he or she stepped from the chorus. Playwrights learned to use stage direction, mime, and wordplay to delight and inform their audiences.

The plays of early Greeks have survived through time to become classic theater that audiences still enjoy. Many of the techniques and plots developed by these early artisans have become the basis for modern theater, movies, and even music videos.

Why Teach Playwriting?

Playwriting is a wonderful way to reinforce language arts, reading skills, and listening skills. After all, both conversation and playacting are essential activities of childhood; drama builds on these natural inclinations. Because students are often less threatened by this type of writing, they're usually more willing to experiment and revise.

While you'll need to teach a few new language skills throughout this book, many of the lessons enhance writing skills that students have practiced since the early grades. Topics that may be new to your students include dialogue, scene description, character development, and plot.

How to Use This Book

Playwriting involves a specific form, which we introduce in Lesson 1. Subsequent lessons introduce a new idea, then build on concepts taught in previous sections. Each lesson includes

- The Director's Chair, an explanation of the techniques or skills developed in the lesson, including short sample scripts;
- Prewriting Activities that help students become more familiar with the topic and give them opportunities to experiment before they tackle a new technique;
- Stage Write activities with step-by-step instructions for writing scripts using new skills;

- Helpful Hints that provide further guidelines for the activities;
- Extensions that can be used during writer's workshops or as homework or learning center assignments.

We encourage teachers to try each activity with students. As you share your work, you'll be modeling the kinds of author behaviors that are central to the writing process.

Also, though we've included short examples of each technique, we encourage you to save your students' writing as real-life samples for future classes. These can be extremely effective in helping children understand new concepts and motivating them to try new techniques.

The Role of Audience

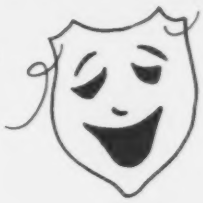
Performing or reading a script is a form of publishing out loud. Writers can tell by the attentiveness of their audience where they need to refine their dialogue, change the action, or substitute more effective vocabulary. Here, some suggestions for script-sharing:

- Designate an area of the classroom as the stage. Provide the actors with seats, but allow them to move about as the script dictates. Encourage children to mime props instead of using real objects.
- Always have the author introduce the script by telling where the action takes place, who plays each character, and any pertinent information that provides clarity for the audience. This establishes the author's ownership of the script.
- Give the actors time to review the script. Reading a script cold often results in stumbles and miscues that can be distracting to the audience. It can also be nerve-wracking for the reader.
- Encourage good listening skills and constructive criticism. Students could pose their suggestions as questions: *Could you explain what happened after Judy went swimming?* Remind the class to applaud at the end of every reading to honor the efforts of writer and reader.
- From time to time, invite a guest audience into the classroom to hear works-in-progress. Outsiders can contribute interesting new perspectives and make the children feel particularly special.
- At the end of the year, invite students to choose the best scripts they've written to cast and present during a special Playwright's Festival.

LESSON ONE

FORM AND CONVERSATION

Writing dialogue is fun!



Alas! I suppose so...

Director's Chair

Writing dialogue may not feel natural to your children in the beginning. It's hard to make verbal communication sound real on paper! Once children have had some practice, however, they'll find that writing dialogue is in some ways easier than writing conversation in other kinds of stories. In written dialogue, character names are always capitalized and followed by a colon. Sentences still require periods, question marks, or exclamation points.

NORMAN: I don't have a thing to wear to that party Friday night.

TOM: Your closet is jammed with clothes. The Gap doesn't have as many outfits as you do! We go through this every time there's a party.

NORMAN: Just 'cause I want to look my best doesn't mean you have to get sarcastic.

TOM: What do you mean? I merely stated the truth.

NORMAN: Maybe if I was a little more confident—like you—I wouldn't have to ask. I'd just wear the same old grungy thing.

TOM: Gee, thanks.

Prewriting Activity

- Group students in pairs.
- Review the definition of *conversation.*

- Ask partners to engage in conversation about anything that comes to mind for five minutes. You might suggest some topics, such as *What I did last weekend.* Encourage students to start conversations with a question, like *What did you do last weekend?*
- Remind students to take notes of what each person says during the conversation. (Exact quotes are not necessary.)
- After children have discussed their conversations with the rest of the class, use one pair's notes to rewrite the conversation in proper dialogue form. Point out to students that punctuation within dialogue will help the readers or actors know *how* to read the script.

Stage Write

Ask children to use themselves as one character in a dialogue and someone they know as another character. The second character should be someone they talk to often, like a friend or a parent.

Encourage children to select a topic that might be fun to discuss. For example: *What I'll wear to the party; Why my best friend is great; Reasons why I don't like vegetables.*

After children have developed a dialogue, encourage them to share with the rest of the class. Discuss how reading a dialogue is different from reading other forms of writing.

Helpful Hints

- You may want children to tape-record their first conversations, then transcribe them into dialogue form.
- Ask students to use expressive voices when sharing their dialogues. For instance, if the topic of conversation is something distasteful to one or both participants, how could they use tone of voice to indicate disgust?

Extension

Write a short scene in which you are being interviewed by a reporter for a newspaper article. Since you don't have to be yourself in this scene, let your imagination really take off. Become the person you *wish* you were!

LESSON TWO

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Director's Chair

Using questions in a dialogue opens up the possibilities of both conversation and plot. The way a character asks a question, and how the other characters answer, can give information about a scene and add depth to personalities.

MILLIE: Who's the tallest person in our class?

JODI: Um...I'd say Shari.

MILLIE: Should we ask her to play on our team?

JODI: Why not? After all, she does own the basketball.

Prewriting Activity

- On the overhead, make a list of people who might meet in a casual encounter. For example, two tourists on a cruise ship, children playing house, or teachers in the faculty room.
- Ask students to select a set of characters from the list (or come up with their own) and think of things they might talk about. For example, two tourists on a cruise ship might discuss the weather during the voyage, what they are looking forward to seeing when they reach their destination, why they are taking a vacation.
- List ideas on the chalkboard or a chart.

Stage Write

Have students select a pair of people from the above list as subjects of a dialogue, or think of their own settings and characters.

After brainstorming why these two people might have come together, tell students they should jump right into the "center" of their scenes. The characters should ask each other questions to help the audience understand where the scene takes place, what's happened before, and what might happen next.

Helpful Hints

- Examples of encounters that help build questioning techniques: one person won't tell the other person a big secret; a character is trying to find out what grade a fellow student got on a math test; a mother tries to find out what her child would like for a birthday dinner.
- As students listen to dialogues written by their classmates, encourage them to determine whether questions and answers appear natural to individual characters. Students might offer suggestions about how to write a particular line more effectively.
- Remind students that we speak differently from the way we write; they should edit stilted dialogue so that it sounds real.

Extension

Write a short scene in which someone is being questioned by a teacher about cheating on an exam. Both characters should make good points and appear to be telling the truth. Don't write an ending; let your friends argue which character they sympathize with more.

LESSON THREE

STAGE DIRECTIONS AND BLOCKING

Director's Chair

"Blocking" or stage directions specify what the actor should be doing as a particular line is uttered. Blocking can be written as a complete sentence, a single word, or a short phrase and can be inserted anywhere in the script. Some directions are only stated once; the actor will develop and refine the directions while rehearsing the script.

Stage directions are always enclosed in parentheses. Punctuation isn't important, but the first letter of directions is always capitalized. Here's an example:

ROYCE: (*Rising from chair*) Oh, my bones ache!

SAM: (*Sits on floor*) It's all in your head. (*Does some sit-ups*)

ROYCE: (*Reaching behind*) No, actually it's in my fifth vertebra. (*Leans on back of chair*)

(*SAM rolls over, does a somersault, flexes muscles.*)

ROYCE: You make it look so effortless, Sam.

SAM: (*Smiles*) That's cause I'm twelve, gramps.

Prewriting Activity

- On the chalkboard, write one of the dialogues you (or a student) developed during a previous lesson.

- After reviewing the information above, ask students to help you rewrite the scene with "blocking."
- Use proper blocking format to add students' directions to the dialogue. Encourage children to be as precise and descriptive as possible to make the scene more realistic or exciting. For instance, (*Turns around*) could be more interesting as (*Picks up pencil and breaks it. Throws pieces away.*)

Stage Write

Ask students to write scripts, including dialogue and directions, based on scenes from favorite books. Dialogue does not have to exactly match quotes the book's author might have used during the scene; students may want to supply dialogue where there was none originally.

Students will write blocking directions based on action described in the scenes they choose to script. Remind them that these scripts will be performed, so where the book author might provide description in words, they will have to think of ways to present the information dramatically.

When they've finished writing, students can share their scenes and ask classmates to guess the titles of the books they chose.

Helpful Hints

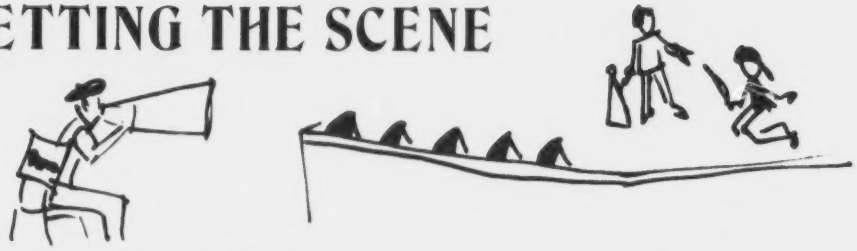
- To demonstrate the importance of blocking, you may want students to read a few scenes with no directions. Ask students to note how directions add meaning to a script.
- Children may overuse blocking directions when they first start out. That's okay. With practice, this technique will be scaled back as writers begin to rely more on dialogue to communicate their ideas.
- When scripts are shared aloud, a third reader should read the blocking directions. This helps delineate the action from the actual dialogue.

Extension

Create a scene in which two actors are tied up and must move from place to place trying to "escape." Try to use a great deal of blocking and very little dialogue; such an approach is often used in farce and slapstick comedy.

LESSON FOUR

SETTING THE SCENE



Director's Chair

A playwright usually decides where the actors will stand, how the set looks when the curtain rises, and how characters will make their entrances *before* writing the dialogue. Some veteran playwrights begin writing the dialogue and allow the setting to evolve as they go along, but that's difficult for most beginners.

Scene starters are written in parentheses; characters' names are written in all capital letters.

(MARLENE is seated on the couch. She grabs a pillow and buries her head in it, then begins punching it with great force. She then throws the pillow on the floor and stomps on it repeatedly. She grabs the letter that is on the couch, tears it into little pieces and tosses them into the air like confetti.)

MARLENE: I'm going to get even with that Tyler if it's the last thing I do!

Prewriting Activity

- Distribute old magazines and catalogues. Ask children to choose pictures of scenes with at least two people in them.
- Give students five minutes to make up a short vignette about their pictures. What are the people in the picture doing? Why are they there? What are their surroundings like?

- Ask students to share their vignettes with a partner or the whole class without revealing the pictures they chose. Listeners should try to sketch scenes based on the writers' descriptions.
- Students compare their pictures with listeners' interpretations. What details could they have included that would have made the setting clearer?

Stage Write

After sharing the information about scene-setting, above, ask students to rework the descriptions they wrote in the prewriting activity as settings for a play. Scene starters should be followed by one or two lines of dialogue only.

After sharing scene starters, students can trade magazine pictures and repeat this exercise.

Helpful Hints

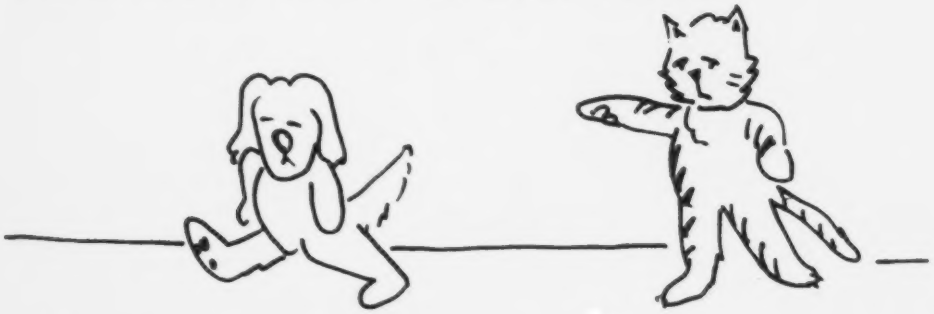
- Students often ask: *How long should my opening scene be?* The answer varies with the situations students want to tackle. Encourage students to visualize how the stage will look when the curtains open and the actors begin to speak, then fill in details as they go.
- An important element in this exercise is hearing as many scene starters as possible. You may want to use real plays as examples, but definitely include student samples, as well.

Extension

Write a scene starter that will take place on a completely bare stage. Why would a playwright choose *not* to use props or scenery? Include a few beginning lines of dialogue after writing your scene starter.

LESSON FIVE

ANIMALS AND CREATURES



Director's Chair

Exploring the unique qualities of different animals paves the way for learning about metaphors and developing better powers of description. Children may want to use animals as the basis for script plots in the future.

CHICKEN: (*Speaks rapidly and rattles on and on*) Mad, mad, mad, and throw in angry. Who would ever believe the pecking order in this barnyard? I'm mad as a wet hen because I spent the day sitting on my egg only to receive at least a dozen complaints from Farmer Frank. Next thing I know he'll be here trying to cheer me up with a bad chicken joke. And that's no yolk.

Prewriting Activity

- Ask students to take turns talking about animals they find interesting. List examples and adjectives kids use to describe them on chart paper.

- Encourage each student to write a single piece of dialogue for an animal based on its physical attributes.
- Give students time to share their dialogues. Ask the class to discuss how they translated the characteristics of an animal into the way it talked, moved, and acted in their scripts.

Stage Write

Ask students to combine two animals to make a new creature. Help them think of adjectives or other words to describe their animals. Drawing a picture of the animal may help students hone their ideas. Students should write a scene, including dialogue and blocking, starring their make-believe animals. Encourage your writers to share their scenes and act them out.

Helpful Hints

- Interesting animal combinations include natural adversaries (e.g., fox and lamb), big and small animals (e.g., ant and elephant), or insects and mammals.
- Encourage students who are having trouble coming up with ideas to get together with other students for brainstorming sessions. Advocate the open sharing of ideas. Remind students that creative people come up with their best ideas as part of a team.

Extension

Write a dialogue in which you are a television reporter interviewing an endangered species that has rarely been seen by humans. (We all know animals don't really talk, but this is fiction!) Be prepared to do your interview in front of a "live" television audience (your classmates).

LESSON SIX

THE TELEPHONE

Director's Chair

One-sided telephone conversations, in which the audience sees or hears an actor talking to some offstage character, figure prominantly throughout many modern dramas. In a well-written telephone conversation, the audience learns new information about characters and plot, background material, and foreshadowing of upcoming events.

(*A MAID is dusting the room. The phone rings. She looks at it but shrugs and keeps dusting. Phone continues ringing. Finally, after several rings, she rolls her eyes and answers the phone.*)

MAID: Smithfield residence... Sorry the Madame is not home, but... (*Pause*) Oh, Madame! (*Laughs*) I didn't recognize your voice. (*Pause*) I've got a pencil right here. Shoot! I mean, go ahead. (*Sits on couch and does other things while taking the information. She doesn't write anything down.*) Your husband's home at 6:30. Pick up the baby at 5:00 P.M.... Yes, I'm writing this all down... Pick up two heads of lettuce. Take nine tomatoes to our next door neighbor...No, I won't forget that Reverend Smith will pick up Gregory at 7:30 to make it in time for their 8:00 meeting. Got it all, Madame. (*Hangs up and talks directly to the phone.*) Madame thinks I'm some kind of dummy. What's to remember? Her husband should pick up three carrots at 5:00 P.M. so when he picks up Reverend Brown at 6:00 P.M. for their 7:00 P.M. meeting because he forgot to pick up the baby...off the floor. Hmmm...

Prewriting Activity

- Ask a few volunteers to tape-record themselves having a real phone conversation and share it with the class.
- Ask children to listen to the tapes and "fill in the blanks" by guessing what the speaker on the other end of the line might have said.
- Ask students to share their ideas. What cues from the part of the conversation they heard helped them imagine what was said by the other person?
- Compare different interpretations. Ask the original speaker to explain what was actually happening on the other end of the phone during the conversation.

Stage Write

Ask students to write fictional accounts of phone conversations as they would be presented on the stage, with the audience able to hear only one actor. Remind children to use the kinds of words, expressions, and vocal intonations that worked especially well during the prewriting exercise.

Helpful Hints

- If children are having trouble thinking of ideas, try these: a character dials the phone and keeps getting the wrong number; the telephone rings a number of times but nobody will answer it; a character calls a crisis center hotline and asks for help.
- Remind students that conversations do not have to be balanced. When one character speaks, the other might make a noise or "pause meaningfully" or say nothing at all. Sometimes these responses have more significant impact than verbal ones.

Extension

Write a scene in which a very young girl has recently been taught to answer the telephone. The phone rings and she answers it just as she has been taught by her parents. The caller could become irritated or frustrated, or amused.

LESSON SEVEN

ANGER

Director's Chair

Expressions of anger—like other strong emotions— often provide the most engaging, interesting scenes in any drama. After all, emotion is an everday reality of being human!

Exploring anger gives students new ideas for incorporating emotion in their writing.

(*RITA stands over RUTH with her hand extended. RUTH does not look at her during the exchange.*)

RITA: Give me that pencil!

RUTH: It's mine. Perry saw you take it from my desk when I was in the hall.

RITA: Wait a second! Look at the name of the company on the pencil. There isn't another company called Hammer, Spitz, and Sodder in America. And, by the way, whose dad works there?

RUTH: Oh, that's right, I forgot...you steal from your own family company, too. (*Breaking pencil*)

(*RITA stands speechless unable to believe what went on before her eyes.*)

Prewriting Activity

- Discuss with your class different ways in which people express anger. (See Appendix A.)
- Have students act out various degrees of anger. Small groups can also brainstorm different kinds of anger-inducing situations.
- Ask students to note the kinds of facial expressions, words, and tones of voice used to show different degrees of anger.

Stage Write

Ask students to write short dialogues featuring two people who are in conflict. The scenes do not need to have resolutions. Children then lower or raise the intensity of anger expressed in the scenes they wrote. Remind them that, as writers of their scenes, they control levels of emotion.

Ask students to discuss the specific strategies they used to show anger. Do the expressions of anger they created justify the situations presented? Is the anger expressed in any clever or imaginative ways?

Helpful Hints

- If children need help, provide these examples: a student pleads with her teacher for a better grade; a student claims he is innocent of cheating; someone finds out her parents have decided to move without consulting her, so she confronts them.
- Remind students that, though they'll be making up these stories, they should refer back to experiences they've had with anger or conflict to make scripts more realistic.

Extension

Two characters are discussing how they combat the urge to strike out physically or use abusive language when they're angry. As they talk, the emotional tension actually escalates and they begin acting out their "strategies."

LESSON EIGHT

NOTES, LETTERS, AND TELEGRAMS

Director's Chair

Letters, notes, or telegrams often introduce tension or new information into a dramatic plot. In this exercise, you'll use students' familiarity with writing notes and letters to help them develop scripts more completely.

Prewriting Activity

- In front of the class, open and read a make-believe telegram informing someone that, for instance, an eccentric relative is coming to visit or a scientific experiment has resulted in some incredible breakthrough.
- Ask students to discuss how three different characters might react to the same news. For instance, upon hearing that their unusual aunt is coming to visit, one child might whoop with glee while her brother rolls his eyes and her mother sighs loudly.
- Brainstorm other types of telegrams that people might receive and what reactions each might elicit.

Stage Write

Ask students to write two or three short telegrams. Each telegram should contain information that could possibly change the lives of one or more people. Ask writers to develop several lines of dialogue in which characters react to the message. Repeat this activity with a short note and a longer letter.

Helpful Hints

- Any "unexpected message" device can be effective in a scene, as long as it isn't too lengthy. Students should ask themselves whether the letter, telegram, or note really adds interest or suspense to a scene.
- Examples to aid brainstorming: a character writes a letter to her best friend explaining why they can never see each other again; a telegram informs you that you've just won a contest; students pass a note around the classroom, causing a great deal of disruption.
- Scenes occasionally work better if there is opposition to the information in the note. Example: *I've gotten a fabulous offer. But it would mean that I must leave tonight. Are you coming with me?*
- Sometimes characters do not explicitly divulge the contents of a letter, but we understand the gist of it from their physical reactions. Encourage some students to try this approach.

Extension

A character writes a note explaining that she's going to do something drastic that will change her life, like running away, quitting school, or giving up her dream of becoming an artist. A second character enters and sees the note. She doesn't know the contents, but suspects something is terribly wrong.

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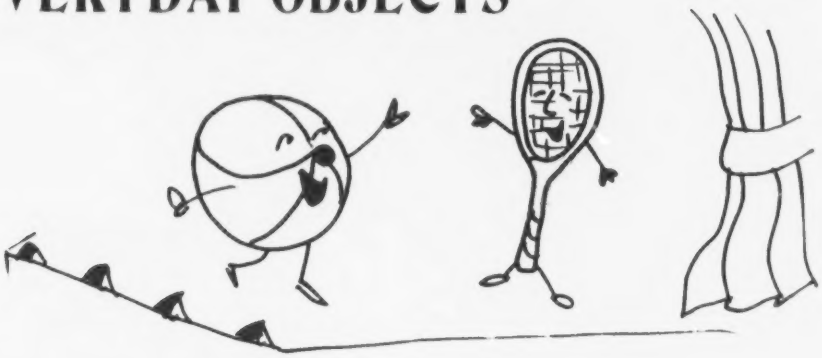
LESSON NINE

EVERYDAY OBJECTS



Director's Chair

A good writer can give even the most lifeless of objects personality. This type of exercise stimulates creativity and allows children to explore humor in writing.

(*Two shoes enter from opposite sides of the stage. SHOE #1 tends to drag his feet. SHOE #2 races around the stage with a zest for life.*)

SHOE #1: What a day! (*Tapping foot three times*) I've been following that guy like a shadow.

SHOE #2: Life isn't easy, being a (*short tap dance*) name brand shoe.

SHOE #1: What a tongue lashing I took because he couldn't find me under his bed. (*Walks over to other shoe, and shows the bottom of his shoe.*) Look!

SHOE #2: Forget it. He's a heel and you won't get no respect. They walk over you every time without so much as an "excuse me please."

Prewriting Activity

- Ask students to select any object and list as many human attributes for it as possible. For example, what kind of personality would a teakettle have? Does it get angry often and pronounce words that begin with *s* with great emphasis? Does a teakettle always think it's correct?
- Let students draw pictures of their "humanized" objects, then share them with classmates.

Stage Write

Ask children to choose two or more similar objects in the classroom around which to write dialogues. For example, a pen and a pencil could argue over which one is the better writer.

After presenting their dialogues to classmates, allow children to combine their objects with another student's to make a new script.

Helpful Hints

- This is a perfect time to explore the use of puns, homonyms, and other kinds of wordplay.
- Remind students to insert action as much as possible to add interest.
- Some dialogues students might want to develop, if they can't think of their own ideas, could take place between tea and coffee; salt and pepper; lettuce and tomato; eraser and chalkboard; rectangle and square; right hand and left hand.

Extension

Write a scene in which the sun and moon are debating who is more important. The debate does not have to be negative; perhaps the moon is feeling useless and needs the encouragement of his friend, Ms. Sun.

LESSON TEN

JOY

Director's Chair

Joy is a pivotal human experience played out onstage. The strategies children use to express this emotion can be applied to other writing experiences as well.

(*MOM is seated at a table. Daughter LAKISHA enters the room throwing papers into the air and jumping up and down with excitement.*)

LAKISHA: I won! (*Twirls round and round*) I won! I knocked everybody off.

MOM: Calm down. Why are you so excited? You finished cleaning your room?

LAKISHA: I've been chosen to go to the Spelling Championship at the state capital next month. They pay for my airplane ticket and everything else! And you can go, too!

MOM: (*Hugging her*) Fabulous… Stand back. (*Walks around her*) I'm looking at a champion. Your hard work has paid off.

LAKISHA: (*With a huge smile, flexing her muscles like a champ*) Awesome, awesome, awesome!

Prewriting Activity

- Ask children to brainstorm reasons they've felt joy in the past.
- Reproduce copies of the Joy Thermometer (Appendix B) or use it on an overhead projector. Ask children to act out various "degrees" of joy.
- Explore this question with students: How are expressions of joy similar to and different from expressions of anger?

Stage Write

Ask each student to choose a degree of joy from the thermometer and write a short skit showing why and how it might be expressed. Students don't need to develop the whole story, just the circumstances surrounding the joyful moment.

Helpful Hints

- Remind students that expressions of joy are too intense to be sustained for any length of time. Scenes based on this emotion work better if there is a gradual rise in the degree of emotion and a quick descent after it peaks.
- To help students further understand how emotion rises and falls, try graphing one of the scenes they write. Your graph should resemble a bell curve, with the tallest part representing the "peak" moment.
- For students having trouble brainstorming ideas, suggest the following: two characters take their first steps on some new planet; a father discovers that his son does not have a dreaded disease; two sisters separated for years meet for the first time at an airport.
- Check out a thesaurus to find "happy" words to use in scripts. *Euphoric, blissful,* and *content* are some to try.

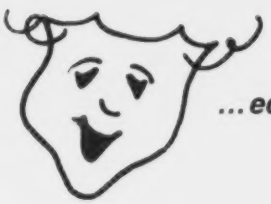
Extension

Write a short scene in which an actor is trying to communicate her happiness at having won an Academy Award, but is too excited to make much sense.

LESSON ELEVEN

INTERRUPTIONS AND FRAGMENTS

I never get a word in...



...edgewise?

Director's Chair

In real life, people often converse in sentence fragments. Skillful use of fragments throughout a dialogue can make it feel more authentic.

Interruptions in dialogue are usually indicated by an *ellipsis* (three consecutive periods) after the last speaker finishes.

(*Two characters enter. Their conversation is rapid-fire. They're using a lot of body language, gesturing, moving around.*)

ACTOR ONE: Hello?

ACTOR TWO: Don't I know you? Aren't you the...

ACTOR ONE: Saturday. The mall. You're the kid who...

ACTOR TWO: Right! You remembered.

ACTOR ONE: Who'd forget the fountain! People looking at you like you're...

ACTOR TWO: You, laughing your head off because I was splashing everybody in sight.

ACTOR ONE: Those soapsuds created quite a strange image...

ACTOR TWO: It wasn't the soap as much as the police...

ACTOR ONE: Say no more. (*Sings "Memories"*)

Prewriting Activity

- Pick two students to carry on a conversation about everyday things. As soon as a listener has heard enough, he or she can cut off the speaker with another thought.
- Repeat the exercise, but this time ask participants to interrupt each other in an annoying way. As a class, discuss the differences between both skits.

Stage Write

Review the format for indicating interruptions in a dialogue. Then ask students to write short scenes in which two characters meet and speak to one another in short rapid sentences. Not every line should be interrupted; out of ten exchanges of dialogue, there might be four or five interruptions.

Helpful Hints

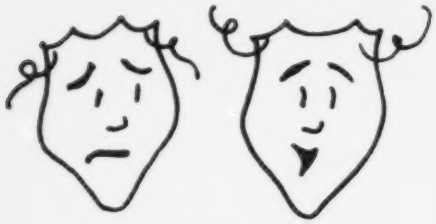
- This interruption technique can be beaten to death. However, students need to learn the technique. Quick banter tends to rev up dialogue.
- Play starters: a slow bear tries to tell an impatient fox about a recent adventure; long lost friends meet at a bus stop only to discover they don't know each other at all; a girl is rushing out the door to meet her best friend as her mother reminds her to be careful, wear her boots, come home on time, etc.
- Have the class read scripts at different speeds. Experiment with tempo.

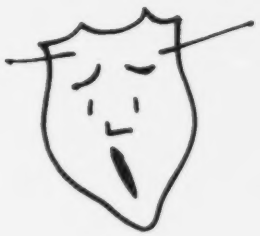
Extension

Write a short piece of dialogue in which one character is hanging from a rope and a second character is looking down from the roof. Why is the student on the rope in the first place?

LESSON TWELVE

USING THREE OR MORE CHARACTERS





Director's Chair

Including a third character in a scene often helps expand the plot. This exercise enables children to begin to develop more complicated scripts.

GARCIA: (*Reading his book, sneezes loudly and messily*) I've got a cold!

GEORGE: (*Holding book away*) Ugh!

ANNE: (*Wiping off her paper with her sleeve.*) And look, you've made my ink smear.

GEORGE: (*Searching the table*) Those little germ guys are all over the place.

GARCIA: Well, *excuuuuuse* me. (*Sneezing wildly again*)

(ANNE takes a bottle of spray deodorant out of her purse and sprays it all over the table. Suddenly, all the actors begin to sneeze.)

Prewriting Activity

- With your class, discuss the differences between a close friendship involving only two people and one involving a threesome. What are the benefits of a mutual friendship between a greater number of people? (For instance, a wider range of ideas when brainstorming things to do.) What are the disadvantages? (For instance, sometimes one person gets left out.)

Stage Write

Ask small groups of students to choose scripts for two characters from an earlier lesson and discuss what has happened so far in the script and what might happen next. Invite students to create a third character who could add a new perspective or interesting twist to their scripts. For instance, if the two characters are rough-and-tumble types, a shy, bookish newcomer might change the direction of the story. Remind them that the number of speaking lines assigned each character doesn't have to be equal; there can be a dominant character in the scene who controls most of the action and dialogue.

Helpful Hints

- Encourage children to avoid predictable dialogue in which characters speak repeatedly in identical sequence.
- If students want to start from scratch to develop a script, suggest some of these examples: a switchboard operator interrupts a conversation between two people on the phone; a mother and father lecture their child about good manners while eating at a restaurant; three strangers sit side by side on a plane trip.

Extension

Write a scene in which three characters try to interact with each other, but never seem to connect. One character doesn't listen, another talks all the time, while the third throws in silly ideas.

LESSON THIRTEEN

ROADS TRAVELED

Director's Chair

Being able to write interesting, but believable, plot twists is a handy play writing skill. Most good twists are based on some sort of sudden change in the attitude, outlook, or values of one or more characters. Sometimes a twist in plot happens as the result of an unexpected or difficult decision.

(Two people sit opposite each other. JOEL drums his fingers on the table; TINA, slowly placing napkin on table, knows what she has to do.)

TINA: We've spent a lot of time working this out, Joel. Time's up. You need to decide.

JOEL: *(Rises from table and stands with his back to the audience.)* Why should I have to make this kind of decision? I'm only 12!

TINA: I know. But younger kids have to make these kinds of decisions everyday. Besides, you started the whole thing!

JOEL: What choice did I have? Things just weren't working out the other way. I got sick of it...

(Knock at door. "Police! Open up!")

Prewriting Activity

- Discuss how friendships can be affected when one person changes in some way. For instance, one friend might develop a hobby that takes up most of his time or move to a new state. Changes can also be more dramatic, as when a friend becomes ill or suddenly famous.
- Ask children to think back over their own experiences with changes in a friendship. How did these changes affect each person?

Stage Write

Tell children they will write scripts with themselves as one character and a fictional friend as another. Writers should base their plots on the fact that one person is changing in a way that makes the friendship difficult. What has caused this change? How will each character handle the change? Will the friendship die completely, change into a new relationship, or become even better in the long run?

Helpful Hints

- Remind students to create interest and tension by focusing on the decision a character must make.
- Topics to suggest: a character decides not to see a friend who mistreats her; a baseball player quits the team, and several of his friends, because they are using drugs; a new student joins the class and desperately tries to make friends.
- Remind students that body language and physical action can also communicate conflict and change. Ask them to think about gestures friends use to communicate anger, love, or caring.

Extension

Write a scene in which one character must tell her best friend, for the one-hundredth time, that she doesn't want to smoke.

LESSON FOURTEEN

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Director's Chair

While some of the greatest dramas are based on long periods of dialogue (or monologue), there are always interesting things happening—however subtly—within the conversation. Movement, facial expression, and gestures create focus for the audience during a dialogue.

(WALDO and WARD enter from opposite sides of the stage. They race for the ringing phone. WALDO gives WARD a hard shove that sends him to the floor. WALDO picks up phone and gives a short "Ha-Ha" to his brother. War has been declared.)

WALDO: I got here first. Now you have to wait, like a nice little boy.

(*WARD laughs. He grabs WALDO's homework paper off the table and waves it in front of him. WALDO lunges for the paper, but WARD stays out of his reach. WARD begins to tear the homework paper in a taunting way.*)

WALDO: (*Pointing at WARD*) Don't you dare destroy that assignment!

(WARD begins eating small pieces of the paper; "umms" and "ahhs" as he makes spitballs which he proceeds to shoot at WALDO. WALDO dodges the balls and keeps gesturing for paper.)

WALDO: I won't have to kill you, because after I tell Mom, she'll do it for me.

(WARD deliciously tears up the paper into a million snowflakes and throws them up in the air.)

Prewriting Activity

Mime is a good way to start thinking about how to communicate actions without words.

- On separate slips of paper, write each of the following scenarios:

  —You are eating dinner at a friend's house and are faced with a plateful of food you hate.

  —You are on a crowded, speeding bus, seated beside an elderly man who keeps falling asleep with his head on your shoulder.

  —Two toddlers want to play with the same dump truck.

  —You are sick in bed with the flu and are very bored.

- Ask volunteers to pick a slip of paper from a bag or basket, then *mime* the scene. (In scenes calling for more than one actor, children should interact with an invisible partner, or can choose other students to act out the scene with them.) Remember: No words allowed!
- After a few demonstrations, ask volunteers to mime the same scenes using only a few words or other verbal expressions, where necessary.
- Discuss strategies children used to communicate both emotion and action. Which was easier to communicate through mime? Why? How did being able to add a few words make the task easier?

Stage Write

Ask students to write a short scene in which there's very little dialogue. Children can develop one of the scenes from the prewriting activity or brainstorm their own ideas.

When students perform their skits, ask the audience to describe the action or plot back to the writer. This can help the playwright see where his action needs to be refined, toned down, or beefed up.

Helpful Hint

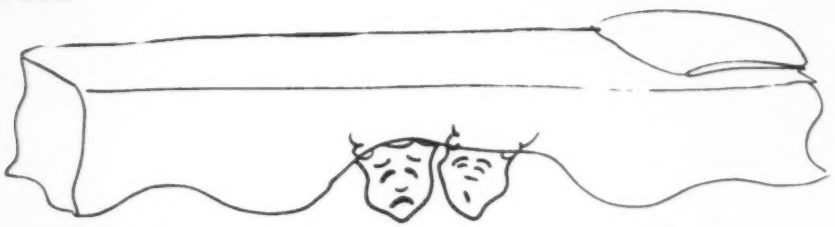
Remind students that action on a stage is different from action shown in movies. On a stage, you can't turn up the volume or use trick photography, so it's important to slightly exaggerate gestures and movements so an audience will "get" what's being said.

Extension

Maggie is rehearsing a show for her theater class. She must learn to sing the lyrics to a song and produce a dance to go along with the music. The problem is, she's not a good dancer. How can she make her production interesting? (Try using actions that are silly, humorous, or exaggerated to detract from Maggie's lack of skills.)

LESSON FIFTEEN

FEAR



Director's Chair

People like to be scared—as long as they can feel safe at the same time! That's why scary movies and books are so popular. Like anger and joy, fear is a strong emotion that really registers, making us feel excited and alive.

For children, who are both vulnerable and dependent, fear is a very real emotion. Children of this age are just beginning to grapple with their own fears in constructive ways, so they'll be especially motivated to explore these feelings.

(The scene is a large room. RONALD searches the room as if he's looking for somebody or something. The lights dim for a moment.)

RONALD: Is...is that you, Helen? *(Lights dim once more.)*

LIGHT: *(A bright LIGHT appears at the back of the stage. An offstage voice is heard.)* Ron, I've returned. I promised you I would.

RONALD: Who's there? I don't believe in ghosts. You're dead. I know, because I...

LIGHT: Revenge is sweet. There's no rest for me until justice is served.

RONALD: *(Racing around the room looking for the source of the voice)* I'm not a fool. I saw your body, and you couldn't have survived...

LIGHT: There's no final rest until I face my killer.

RONALD: Stop it. (*Lights go out*) Get away from me. Don't touch me. Helen, I didn't mean...

Prewriting Activity

- Start by making a list of things people fear—snakes, being alone, the dark, monsters.
- Place the "Fear Thermometer" (Appendix C) on the overhead or copy it onto the chalkboard. Ask children to indicate where each of the experiences they brainstormed would belong on the fear continuum.
- Ask children to show how people react when confronted with their fears. What types of physical gestures and facial expressions communicate fears? For instance, people who are afraid of flying may drive or take trains to their destinations. People who fear snakes often won't walk in the woods.

Stage Write

Ask students to select one level of fear (such as *concerned*) to write about. Encourage them to write about a fear they can relate to. Students write the beginning of a short skit starring a person who is afraid of something.

Remind students that scene-starters, blocking directions, and dialogue can all help communicate feelings of fear. Encourage them to think of ways that actors can use their voices and bodies to show they are either afraid or, as the object of fear, evil or threatening.

Helpful Hints

- Ask children to think of how they may express fear in private as compared to how they would do so in a more public place. Encourage them to use these recollections to communicate facial expressions and gestures more effectively.

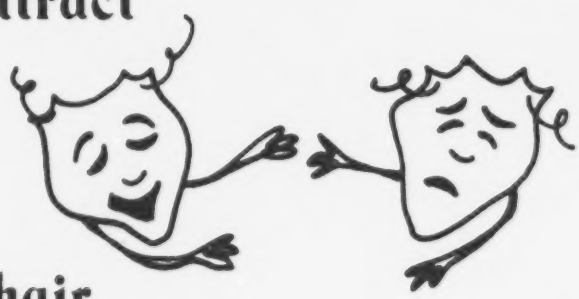
- Bring in some scary Halloween masks and ask children to show how different masks elicit different expressions of fear. For instance, people might react differently to a mythical creature (a vampire) than to a grotesque one (Freddy Krueger).

Extension

Write a scene in which a girl who is afraid of sharks is about to go for a sail. She decides not to tell any of her friends how afraid she is because she doesn't want them to think she's a sissy.

LESSON SIXTEEN

Opposites Attract



Director's Chair

Opposites attract; they also fascinate. Exploring opposites exercises powers of imagination and helps students think of new ideas for dramatic plots.

WATER: You're positively glowing. What are you so happy about?

FIRE: I'm happy because you always let me blow off a little steam.

WATER: There has to be a better way. We can't keep meeting like this.

FIRE: Why not? We're good together; you keep me in line.

WATER: My river does run deep for you, but I worry that our relationship will suffer from burnout.

FIRE: Fear not, my fluid friend, for I cannot live without you.

WATER: You cannot live *with* me either!

Prewriting Activity

- Ask children to think of opposites. For instance, when you say *sun*, they might answer *moon*. Children will also offer less obvious choices; give them time to explain their reasoning and you may be surprised by their answers. For instance, *planet* could also be the opposite of *sun*.
- Challenge students to create a list of at least five interesting pairs of opposites in their writing journals or on paper you hand out.

Stage Write

Divide students into pairs. Ask students to select a set of opposites from their lists to explain to their partners. Together, students can develop a script around their objects or ideas. In their scripts, one object interacts with another according to their opposing characteristics. For instance, a coffee grinder might be complaining about always having to deal with the feisty little coffee beans that come her way each morning.

Helpful Hints

- Opposites can and do coexist. Encourage children to explore the ways two characters might connect in spite of their differences. For instance, one character might convince another to join in some new adventure.
- Children might want to start by drawing a picture of their two opposite characters. They could make a short and simple cartoon using balloons to contain dialogue.
- Examples for children who need them: a beautiful flower is trying to convince a weed that they each have a place in the environment; a spider crawling around its web attempts to entice a bug to come over for a visit.

Extension

Write a scene in which a broom and vacuum argue about who is better. The vacuum represents modern technology; the broom stands for old-fashioned ideas. To the broom, everything was better in the "good old days," but the vacuum thinks newer is *always* better.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

CHUCKLE, CHORTLE, AND GUFFAW

Director's Chair

Humor, even in its subtler forms, is an effective way to get the audience really involved in a drama. Humor can be communicated physically, as in slapstick; verbally, through puns and metaphors; or through the use of irony, when what one character says or does stands in sharp contrast to what the audience already knows.

(This scene takes place at The Flower and Garden Show. MR. SNAPDRAGON enters from one side of the stage and MS. ROSE enters from the opposite. They pass each other and stop, then turn and slowly circle one another.)

SNAPDRAGON: *(Sarcastically)* Aren't we Ms. Somebody? This year's prize winner— you've always been a thorn in my side.

ROSE: It's not easy being the Best of Show. My family stock has been chosen very carefully.

SNAPDRAGON: Don't try to deny it. The whole contest was an inside job. Why, the chief judge was Roselyn Bush, who's married to the clinging vine that owns this building. Let's put our petals on the table and call a leaf a leaf. You stink!

ROSE: The odor I emit is perfume to most noses.

SNAPDRAGON: Well, scent is in the nose of the beholder. And you smell.

Prewriting Activity

- Ask students to recall their favorite funny movies or books. If possible, ask them to skim over a book or rent one of the movies over a weekend and note episodes or situations that make them laugh.
- As a class, brainstorm a list of what makes something funny. For instance, people tend to laugh at feelings they can relate to, such as frustration over small inconveniences (waiting in a long line to use the restroom at a movie theater); the absurd (a tiny mouse with a booming voice); the silly (a clown who keeps banging his huge nose into everything around him).

Stage Write

Ask each student to write a short script based on one funny scene from a book or movie. They should jump right into the middle of some action and begin to write without worrying where the action is leading. Encourage them to focus on facial expressions and silly actions or to use words in interesting new ways.

Helpful Hints

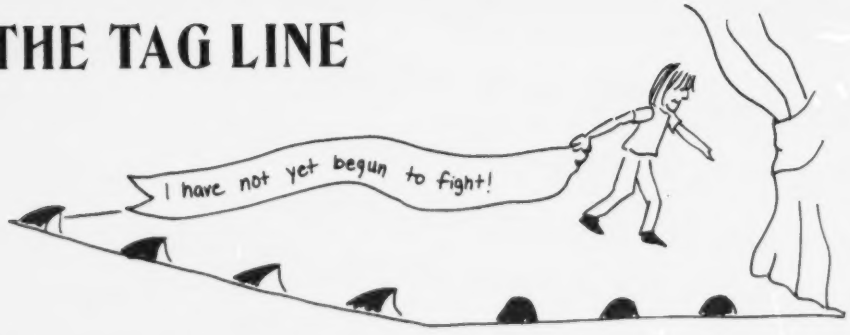
- Ask students to pick someone to read their scripts. Authors can watch the faces in the audience to see how they react and then use their observations to rewrite scripts. Remind them that success isn't necessarily measured in uproarious laughter; a small smile is also rewarding.
- Examples to help children get started: a TV reporter is interviewing Little Bo Peep concerning the disappearance of farm animals; babies at a day care center "talk" about life even though the adults around them can't understand; a piece of gum gets stuck to the shoe of the new class president just as she is about to make her acceptance speech.

Extension

Choose a serious script you wrote for an earlier lesson and make it funny.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

THE TAG LINE



Director's Chair

The final line or action of a scene is called the *tag line*. The tag line leaves the audience feeling thrilled, relieved, or anxious for more. Playwrights try to deliver a punch or emphasis with the tag. Only at the very end of a completed script do we not need a strong tag, when every idea in the script has been resolved and there are no unanswered questions. In the theater world, this is called "the curtain."

TELLER: Next, please.

CUSTOMER: *(Looking around)* I'd like...

TELLER: Loan officer over on your left. Safety deposits are located at the other end of our bank.

CUSTOMER: No. No, give me...

TELLER: Our brochures are by the window. They describe all of our satisfied customer services.

CUSTOMER: *(Pushing hand in pocket, he pulls out a bag of BBs that spill and bounce all over the floor.)* Um, wrong pocket.

Prewriting Activity

- Ask students to brainstorm some lines that could be used as tags. Examples:
  - You'll never do that to me again.
  - So that's where you put my pet lizard!
  - Back to the drawing board!
- Invite volunteers to recite each line using an interesting tone of voice and gestures. Encourage as many interpretations as possible.
- After listing a variety of possible tag lines on a chart, ask students to think of basic scenarios that could lead up to these outcomes.

Stage Write

Ask students to select one tag line from the brainstorming list and develop a scene around it. After they've acted out scenes, ask students to talk about what might happen in the scene to come.

Helpful Hints

- Remind students not to apply life-and-death importance to the final tag line. Most final lines are subtly suspenseful or suggestive. Exaggeration works best when it's used to poke fun at the characters or subject matter.
- Take time to discuss scenes that contain a good tag line. Sometimes a student can have a sensational tag line and very weak dialogue. Ask students to entrust their dialogues to a collaborator who can help them tweak language to make it a little more interesting.

Extension

Write a scene in which a babysitter attempts to teach a young child some basic playground games, but she's having a very difficult time and very little success.

LESSON NINETEEN

SPEAKING OF HISTORY

Director's Chair

Historical events have been the focus of many great plays. Some playwrights attempt to stay as true as possible to history, but because so many events happened long ago, or behind the scenes, poetic license is often both necessary and helpful to the creative process. Children will find many new ideas for dramas by focusing on an historic theme.

STUDENT: I've read so much about you that I feel like I know you. Can we talk?

G. WASHINGTON: Sure. But I'm a bit sensitive about this stuff. Do you know how many people have read about or seen my wooden teeth?

STUDENT: Actually, it's the quarters that have made you famous. And you're on every road sign in the state of Washington.

G. WASHINGTON: Gee, some contribution.

Prewriting Activity

- As a class, make a list of famous people who have contributed to history. Encourage children to also think about how historical events might have affected everyday people—a farmer who fought at Bunker Hill; the assistant who helped Betsy Ross sew the first flag; Sitting Bull's sister.

- Ask students to choose several characters from the list and, in a small group or individually, create one or two lines of dialogue. Children should think about how the time period, living conditions, and circumstances of history would affect what the characters would say.

Stage Write

Invite students to choose characters from history, real or imaginary, important or insignificant, on which to base a one-scene script. If they have difficulty with this assignment, ask them to write an interview with a character from history.

Helpful Hints

- Get students started by suggesting they relate a make-believe conversation between two characters from entirely different historical periods: Babe Ruth and Charles Dickens; King Tut and Frank Lloyd Wright; Susan B. Anthony and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.
- Try this exercise in conjunction with a social studies unit. Encourage students to apply *some* of their factual research to a specific historical period; it will actually make the exercise a little easier. Remind them, however, to use their imaginations to create interesting characters, accentuate humor, or convey a particular message or "moral."

Extension

Script a discussion in which one character tries to persuade a historical character to do something differently from how it was actually done. For example, a fictional character might try to talk King George I out of going to war with the American colonies.

LESSON TWENTY

GRILL 'EM

Director's Chair

Intense question and answer, also known as grilling, is a clever device for helping writers reveal more of a character's personality, practicing more concise sentence structures, and compressing action to make it more succinct.

MOTHER: What are you hiding?

SON: It's personal. Doesn't a guy have a right to privacy?

MOTHER: Not as long as you live under this roof!

SON: *(Sarcastically)* I know the routine. Follow the rules or hit the road.

MOTHER: Don't get smart with me, young man. What do you suppose your father will say to this?

SON: He doesn't care. What's the big deal, anyway?

MOTHER: Let me see that. *(Grabs a magazine from under pillow.)* You ought to be ashamed. Where did you get this filth?

SON: Don't you know?

Prewriting Activity

- Ask two student volunteers to brainstorm scenarios in which someone is being grilled.
- Let students improvise short role-plays in which they demonstrate the action and dialogue.

- Discuss with students the types of vocal tones, body language, and gestures each character used. How did these elements vary depending on the role of each character? Ask the actors how they felt as they played each role. Which was more difficult to act out, the role of griller or grillee?

Stage Write

Ask students to write scripts based on one character grilling another. Writers should focus only on the actual "interviews" and not worry about how they begin or end. Encourage students to indicate the feelings actors need to communicate through blocking directions.

Students who are having difficulty thinking of situations to script may want to base their dialogues on one of the improvisations done during the prewriting activity.

Helpful Hints

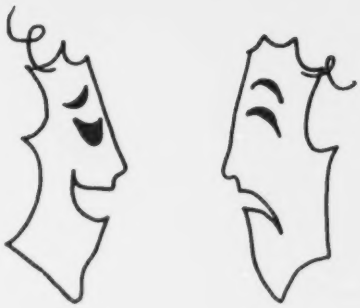
- Remind children not to have the same character ask all the questions so that the flow of conversation seems more realistic.
- Reassure students at the beginning of this activity not to worry where the scene is heading. The dialogue will quickly carve a path for the script. Just keep the conversation moving briskly.
- Tell students they do not have to answer every question a character may pose. Questions can serve to change the subject and introduce a surprise element.
- Examples to try: a mom and dad argue whether they should punish their child's behavior; someone tries to get his friend to admit to lying about stealing; a father is convinced his daughter broke the neighbor's window.

Extension

Write dialogue in which the questions asked never seem to get answered. For example, the president of a company could be asking an employee why he hasn't finished a report; the employee could be trying to avoid answering.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

CHARACTER PROFILE



Director's Chair

Character development is one of the most challenging tasks of a playwright. It is also one of the most important. After all, no matter how exciting the plot, we won't be motivated to follow along if we don't find the characters believable or interesting.

Using a character profile (Appendix D) will help children think more deeply about the people who inhabit their scripts. Over time, they'll develop their own internal templates for developing characters and won't depend on forms.

Prewriting Activity

- Copy and distribute one character profile to each child.
- Ask children to fill out the profiles based on one character from a favorite book. Encourage them to make up any information not stated explicitly in the book.
- Have students share their profiles without revealing characters' names. Other children can take turns guessing characters' identities.

Stage Write

Ask students to choose characters from earlier scripts that they would like to develop. Encourage them to use a profile for each and every character they plan to portray. Invite students to alter or add to the forms if they wish.

After they have completed the forms, ask students to think of ways to use the information to shape the plots of their mini-dramas. It might be helpful to have groups share their profiles and ideas with the class.

Helpful Hints

- Encourage students to use character profiles to develop personalities for other forms of writing.
- Remind students that they don't have to use all the information they've included on their profiles.
- If students have difficulty turning their profiles into "live" characters, encourage them to draw pictures before tackling the scripts. They can elaborate on the pictures as much as they wish to reflect the personalities of the characters.

Extension

You are writing a play based on real characters—some of your friends, for instance. When filling out a character profile, however, alter a few facts to develop new characters from these real individuals. Write a short script or dialogue based on your new characters.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

The Short Script

Once upon a time...

...and they lived happily ever after

Director's Chair

At this point, students are probably ready to develop brief but complete scripts. A short script is usually three to five minutes long; one page of dialogue usually takes about one minute to act out, though this can vary considerably.

You may want to review with students the various techniques you've studied, including blocking, setting the scene, writing dialogue, using humor, and developing characters.

Prewriting Activity

- Ask students to create brief outlines of their scripts showing main ideas, names of characters, blocking directions, and where the main scenes will be set.
- Help students write brief paragraphs explaining the beginnings, middles, and conclusions of each story they will dramatize.

Stage Write

Ask students to develop each part of their outlines, keeping in mind the progression of the stories they want to tell. Students should spend most of their time developing characters based on profiles. They'll also need to determine how characters arrive on stage and what background needs to be provided at the beginning of the first scene.

Invite students to rehearse their scripts in small groups. Audiences can provide feedback on whether a play "feels" complete when it is over, how much empathy they felt for the characters, and how effectively a scene was set up.

Helpful Hints

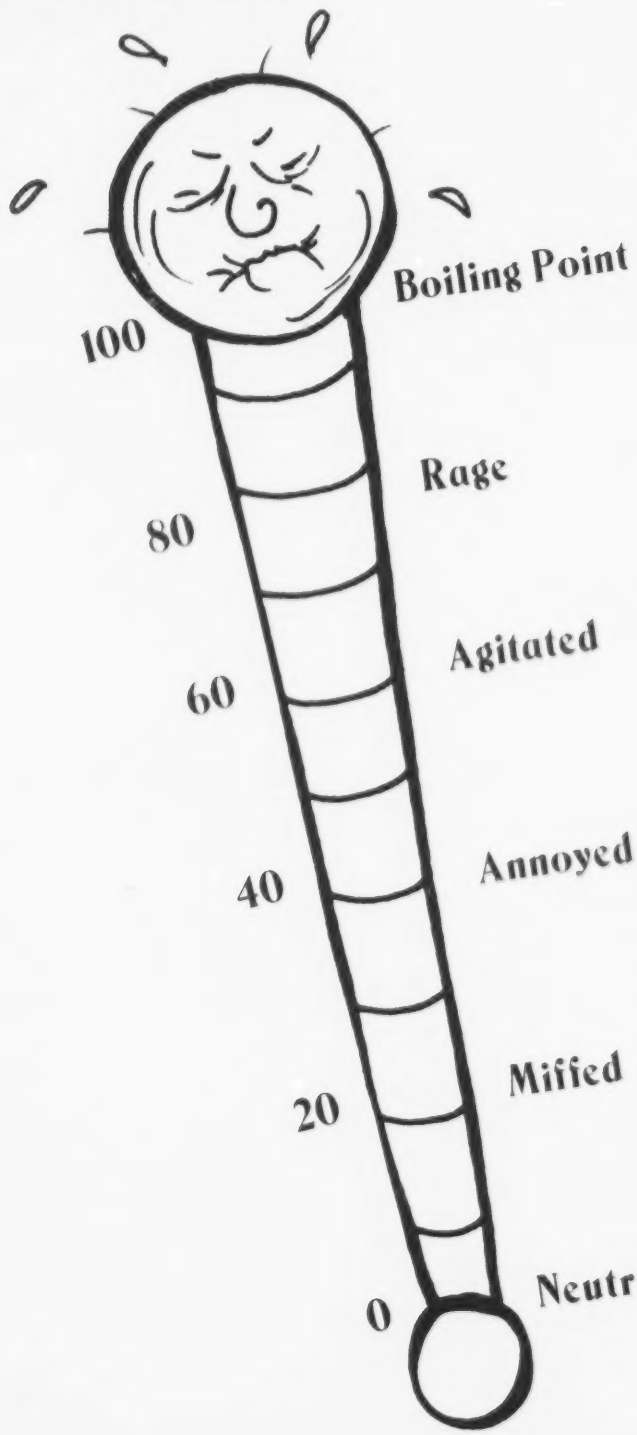
- Remind students that it's fine for them to convert a funny or poignant incident from real life into a script. If an incident they want to relate takes place in bits and pieces over several days, help them think of ways to show the passage of time onstage. For instance, a narrator could simply tell the audience that it's the next day or several hours later.
- Students may want to write rough dialogue first. Encourage them to write in stream-of-consciousness style, resisting the temptation to reread every few minutes. When they think they've written as much as they can, ask them to review their writing and insert new dialogue where necessary.

Extension

Choose a group of friends to help you act out your script. After performing the skit, ask each actor to switch roles so that they are playing a new part. Use their observations about how it felt to act out different roles to revise your script.

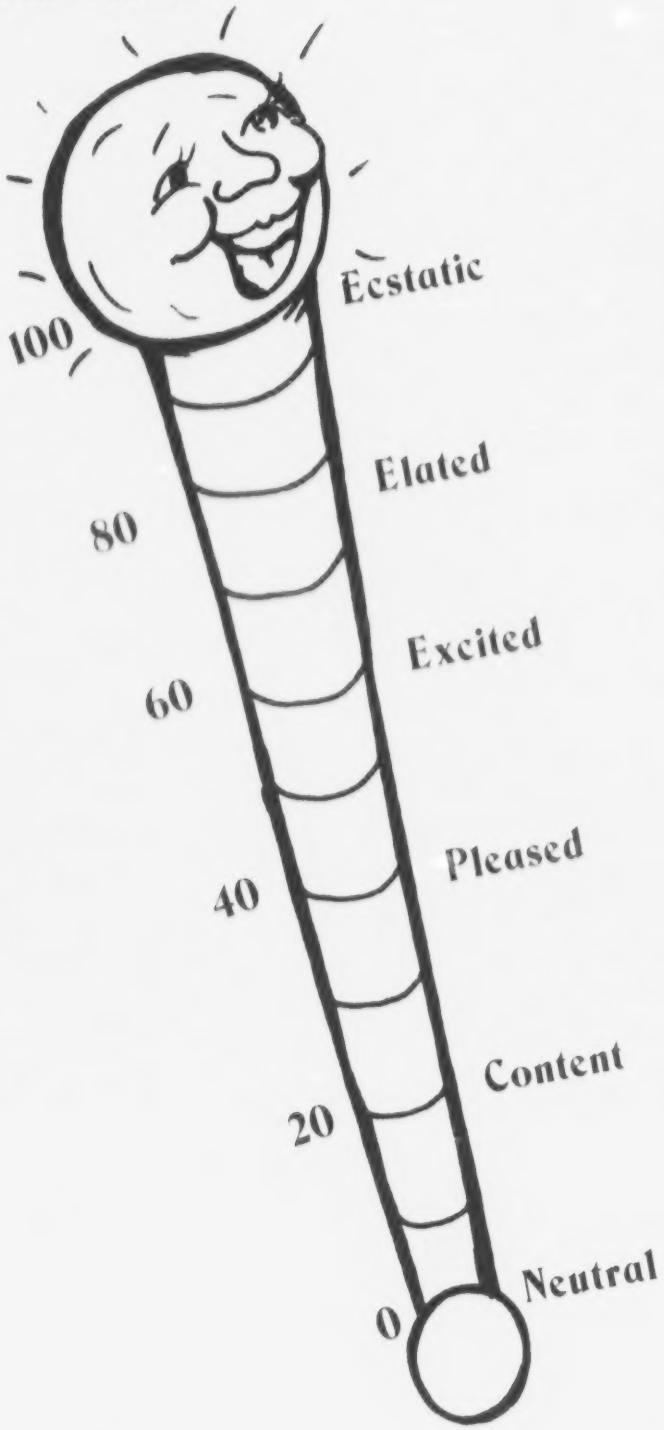
APPENDIX A

Anger Thermometer



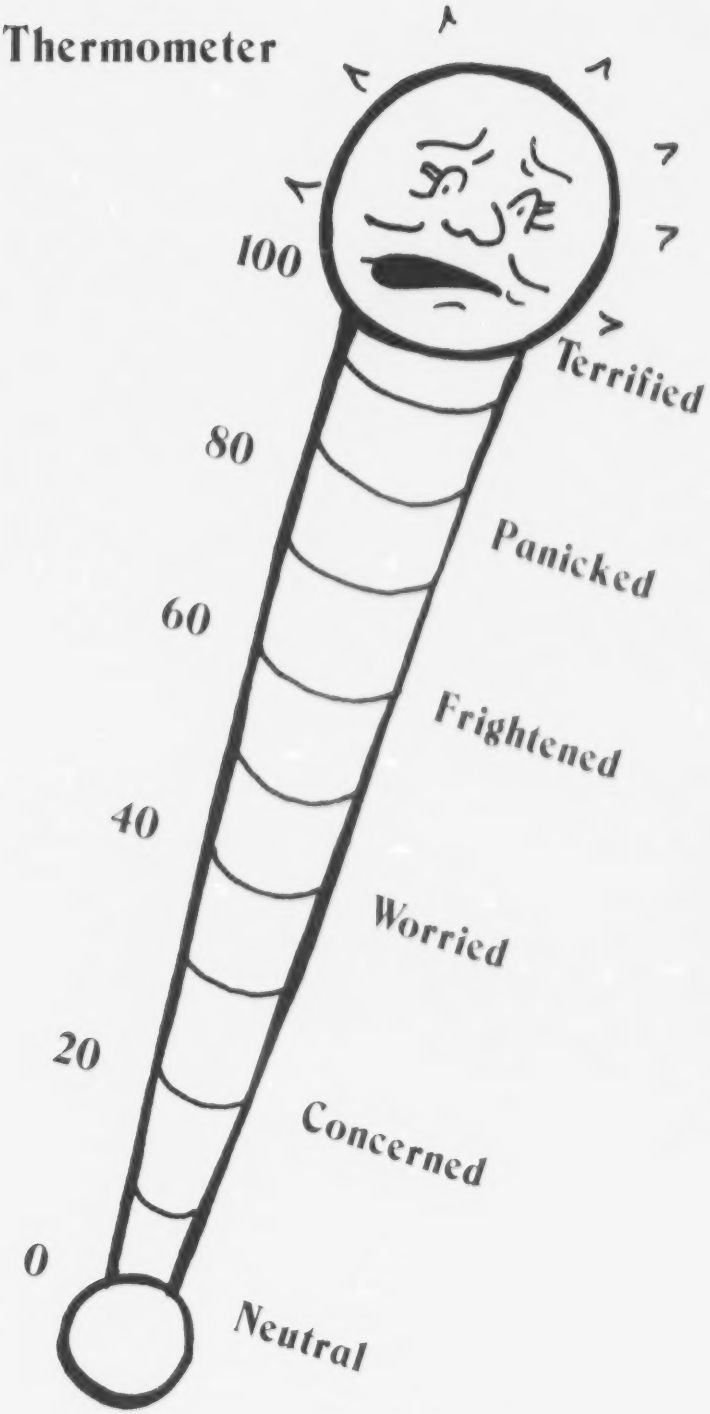
APPENDIX B

Joy Thermometer



APPENDIX C

Fear Thermometer



APPENDIX D

Character Profile

Playwright's Name _____

Playwright's Name _____

Vital Statistics

Full Name _____ Nickname _____

Age _____ Height _____ Weight _____

Male or Female? _____ Ethnic Background _____

Physical Features

Eye color _____ Hair Color _____ Braces? _____

Glasses? _____ Complexion _____

Posture / Physical Movement (slouches, limps, shuffles, etc.) _____

Appearance (good-looking, puffy, untidy, athletic, etc.) _____

Detailed Physical Description _____

Family

How they look, act, speak _____

Brothers / Sisters? _____

Parents Married / Divorced? _____

APPENDIX D
Character Profile, page 2

School/Occupation

Goes to school? _____ Grade _____

Name of school _____

Occupation/Job _____

General Information

Address _____

Parents' jobs _____

Religion? _____

Hobbies? _____

Likes _____

Dislikes _____

Friends _____

Secrets? _____

Talents _____

Describe your character's overall personality.

Draw this character.

STAGE WRITE

By Norman Delue and
Thomas B. Hayward

Norman Delue

All the world's a stage—and children are its most enthusiastic actors!

Stage Write provides a step-by-step plan for using drama in the classroom to build children's language arts and thinking skills. As they progress through a series of engaging activities, students will learn how to write dialogue, set scenes, and communicate emotions through expressive language and mime. Written especially for teachers who might be a little intimidated by the art of playwriting, it's sure to inspire even the most reluctant junior Shakespeare! For grades 4-6.

About the Authors

Norman Delue did undergraduate work in drama at Western Michigan University, graduate theater studies at St. Louis University, and advanced graduate studies at the University of Oregon. He has directed operas and plays both for young people and adults and enjoys occasional stints as an actor and dancer for local theater groups. He is the author of Good Apple's A Class Act: A Creative Drama Guide for Teachers.

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